Stephen Alexander Gills 1905

Album 27
2002.16.1

PHOTOGRAPH OF GILLIS FAMILY HOME ON CHURCH ST
(1930'S)

Midday
+
niece
Marilyn
MacIntyre
/
Marilyn
grew up
at 106 Church St
Midday
lived
most of
his life
here with
sister Kay
+ Mike Wall

Sydney City Council 1905 – Back Row - far right - Stephen A. Gillis

STEPHEN A GILLIS

Stephen A. (Alexander) Gillis was born on a farm on the Meadows Road in East Bay in 1860. He was the son of John A. Gillis and Annie MacDonald, (daughter of then Senator John MacDonald). Being the eldest son of a family of eight, it became his lot to provide for his mother and siblings when his father died in 1882 at the age of 55. In the early 1900's he came to Whitney Pier where he met and married my mother, Jessie Cash, formerly from Irish Cove. They resided on French Street until their sixth child (Kay Gillis Wall) was a year old, at which time (1913) they moved into their new home on Church Street in time for Christmas. I was one of four more children who completed the brood, consisting of Johnnie, Annie, Mae, Theresa, Mickey, Kay, Dannie, Robert, me (Peggy) and Paddy.

We had the best of both worlds, city conveniences plus lots of land containing a pond, which was a popular skating and hockey spot for neighbors before rinks were built, as well as a hill which provided coasting from Lingan Road to Victoria Road. We had two cars, a 1923 Studebaker (Packard design) and a Chevrolet with eising glass for snap on windows on the sides and running boards. It had to be cranked at times in order to start it. This made it possible for us to visit family members in the country and family trips to picnic and pick berries out on Grand Lake Road. My mother always came prepared with picnic baskets consisting of hams, homemade bread, biscuits, butter, etc., always a feast enjoyed by all.

We always had our own cow, horse, chickens and ducks. At one time my father raced his horse on Sydney Harbor in the winter. All our vegetables were home grown and stored in bins in the basement in winter. My father built a root cellar under the veranda, which was insulated with eel grass. He had sides of beef, pork, etc., hanging, which supplied us with our meats. We always had a barrel of apples on hand. There always seemed to be people coming down over the hill who would come to our door looking for food. No one was ever refused. Father was a road construction contractor and many of our roads and highways were built by him and his crew, which consisted of the men, horses, picks and shovels and dynamite. He also had a rural logging camp which employed woodsmen.

We were accustomed to having people coming to our home looking for work. We always had a telephone and one of the first washing machines. To add to the point that there were always men coming to our home looking

for work from my father, i.e., one particular evening after supper in March, 1928, during a severe blizzard, my father, mother and two older sisters were seated in our large front hall, enjoying the warmth emanating from the register above our large coal fired furnace, feeling safe and secure as the winds screeched and howled with a vengeance like a thousand devils outside the house. Suddenly a pounding was heard on the door; Poppa jumped up and said "Holy God! Who could be out on a night like this?" When he opened the door, the wind caught him and took him out onto the veranda. As he struggled to get back into the house, a young stranger appeared beside him. To our amazement, he was a handsome young man whose face was scarlet from the cold weather, wearing only a suit and no hat. He was looking very apprehensive and glancing furtively from one of us to the other and refused a seat, but stood with his back to the door saying, "Mr Gillis, I was told that you have a lumber camp; can you give me a job? Poppa said to him, "My God man it is not fit for a dog to be out tonight; stay the night and I will find something for you in the morning". Abruptly the man turned, opened the door and dashed out into the storm. The next day when our local paper arrived my parents were horrified to see our strange visitor's picture on the front page with the caption "Charged with Murder". My mother exclaimed "Blessed Virgin (in Gaelic), you invited him to stay the night and we could have all been murdered in our beds!" The name of the stranger was Emmitt Sloane, a former American Gold Medal Skier who had fallen on hard times and came to Sydney. He murdered and robbed a young hotel clerk (who was only married six weeks) at a local hotel in town. The clerk had only a couple of dollars on him. The newspaper told how the man had arrived at a lumber camp late at night and had repaired a broken radio in the bunkhouse. When his description came over the radio, beads of sweat came down his forehead. The other men were calm and pretended not to notice. One man, on pretense of going to bed, left the camp and walked to the nearest phone and called the authorities, who arrived before dawn and took him into custody. Emmitt Sloane was incarcerated at the County Jail, subsequently tried and sentenced to hang, which took place once the scaffold was erected. We never discovered who sent him to my father's house or to the lumber camp. This remains a mystery to this day.

My father was politically minded. He received an engraved silver tea service in 1905 from Sydney City Council on which he served as an Alderman for Ward 6. The tea service is now in the possession of his granddaughter Marilyn (Wall) McIntyre. He was a "dyed in the wool" Tory. The year that Gordon S. Harrington was defeated as Premier, my

GORDON S. HARRINGTON

Gordon Sidney Harrington, (1883-1943), was Premier of Nova Scotia from 1930 to 1933. Born in Halifax, N. S., and educated in the public schools of that city, Harrington studied law at Dalhousie University and obtained the degree of LL.B. in 1904. He was called to the bar in 1904 and he practised his profession in Glace Bay. He was mayor of Glace Bay for the years 1913-1915. He served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force from 1914 to 1915, and was Deputy Minister, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, in London, from 1918 to 1920. Following his return to Canada, he practised law again in Glace Bay and later in Sydney. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia for Cape Breton Centre in 1925 and was re-elected in that constituency in 1928. In 1933 he was

elected in the constituency of Cape Breton South. He was Minister of Public Works and Mines in the Rhodes Government from 1925 to 1930. He was Premier of Nova Scotia, as well as Minister of Public Works and Mines, from 1930 to 1933. He was the leader of the opposition in the House of Assembly from 1936 to 1937.

father accompanied him as he campaigned through the streets. Poppa was crushed by the defeat. He suffered a stroke shortly after. He died October 30, 1933 at the age of 73. My mother Jessie, died October 30, 1932, and in March 1933 my sister Theresa died at the age of 23. My brother Danny died during the summer of 1934 at age 19 years.

My father was dedicated to his faith and his parish, Holy Redeemer. He worked closely with the pastors. A cement retaining wall, which he had built to support the church lawn, was still in good condition until it was damaged by a sidewalk plow a few years ago.

A memory of Danny Morrison's (former caretaker at Whitney School), was the numerous times during the winter months that funeral processions could not reach Calvary Cemetery at the top of Church Street. Steve Gillis would hitch up his horse and sleigh, then the casket would be placed on the sleigh surrounded by the six pallbearers. Winters were very severe with blizzards and extremely high snow banks. At times when the horses were chest deep in snow and could go no further, the men would have to shovel their way through the drifts, carrying the casket until they reached the side gate of the cemetery.

Another memory of those days was looking out a rear window of our home on Nov. 1, All Souls Day, watching dozens of flickering candles which the Polish and Ukrainian families had placed on the grave sites of their loved ones. These candles were left there until they burned out. This was a yearly custom in those days.

"Ben Eoin", Cape Breton – which is Gaelic for "Big John's Mountain", is named after my father's grandfather, Big John Gillis, who was the first settler.

SUBMITTED BY MARGARET (GILLIS) RUDDERHAM
OCTOBER, 2001

PHOTOGRAPH OF SILVER TEA SERVICE

INSCRIPTION READS

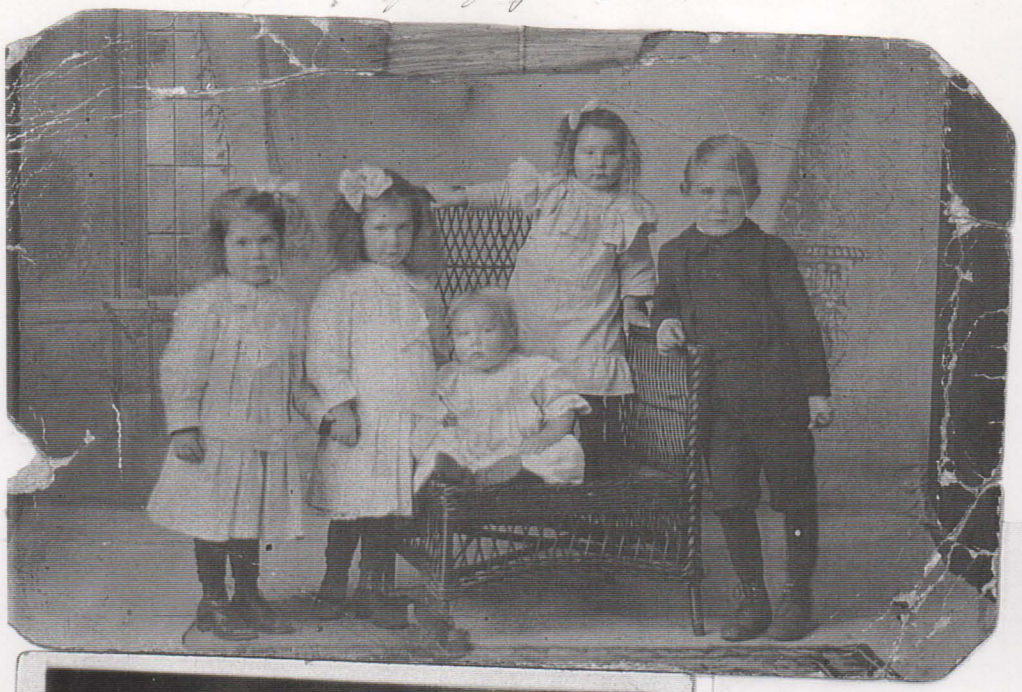
"PRESENTED TO
ALDERMAN S. GILLIS
BY
SYDNEY CITY COUNCIL
JULY6, 1905"

ANNIE + JOHNEY

Ma and Mae

Ma Gillis, Ned Clarke + sister Mae Clarke

Post Card - Gillis Family
L to R. Mary Agnes, Annie
Michael Theresa + John Joseph around 1912



Mae + Annie

Robert, Ned Clarke + Peggy around 1934

Kay, Mae, Peggy + Paddy in yard at 106 Church St.

Theresa, Mae + Peggy

Kay Theresa & Mae

Theresa & Mae around

Mae, Peggy front
Danny & Robert back

1980 Mae & Annie Boston

cousin
Ronnie & Paddy
Mullaly at 7 West St. sharing good
1992 stories

Stephen H. Gillis 1905 Jessie Cash Gillis

1941

Gordon Rudderham + Deanna
5 West St.

1939

Ma, Kay, Mae + Annie

Mae + Peggy

Katie, Mickey + Teresa.

around 1928

Wish space

Kay, Peggy + Theresa

Red Clarke + Rover

ALL OVER THE WORLD

1966

people are reading the highlander

PERU

Can a Cape Bretoner in South America keep in touch with news on the home front? Brother Keith Rudderham, O.M.I., did, via The Highlander.

Here he is perusing the paper in Peru.

everyone has someone somewhere in the world

who would like to keep in touch with home through the HIGHLANDER

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Micky Gillis (Steno)

This group played on CJCB Radio on Friday nights in the 1930's -

City of Sydney School Board 1978 to 1981

Front Row - Margaret Paruch Donald Shewer Manny MacDonald Deanna (Ruddenham) MacNeil

Back Row Bucky Gallant, Jim Davis, Mary Arseneau (Student rep) Duncan Mackay, Bill Kline, Joan MacNeil

A SUBMITTED PHOTO

Photos from the Past: Steel plant security impressive in days gone by

The above photo, submitted by Lorne MacKinnon of Sydney, shows how big an operation the Sydney steel plant was in its heyday. It's hard to believe today that this photo shows only the security personnel woking on No. 1 Gate at DOSCO back in 1955. Front row, left to right: Bernie MacKinnon (Lorne's father), Cyril Mulgrave, John Petrie, Ray MacPherson, chief Charles Richardson, Herbie Adams, Duncan Hines, George MacDonnell; back row, left to right: Lauchie MacKinnon, Andy MacDougall, Gordon Rudderham, Hector MacDougall, Angus MacNeil, Donnie Marks, Wilfred MacDougall.

We want your photo

If you have a unique Cape Breton photo from the past of places, people or things, we invite you to submit it for possible publication. Mail or deliver your photos to Cape Breton Post, 255 George Street, Sydney, N.S., B1P 6K6, Attention: Photos from the Past. Published photos will win the sender a T-shirt from the Cape Breton Post. As soon as you see your photo in the paper, please phone 563-3838, after 12 noon weekdays, and Trina or Debbie will be able to tell you when you can come in to pick up your photo and T-shirt.

Holy Redeemer Church

Deanna's Wedding June 18, 1960

Gordon + Roberta 1953

DEC • 60

Paddy's house in background

Going into house at 106 Church St for Wedding Reception - Only granddaughter to have her Reception at the Gillis home.

Roberta's Wedding - Holy Redeemer Church Aug 5, 1972

Keith

Max Hickman Groom

Roberta

Deanna daughter

Verna - flower girl

Archive both items

2002.16.1

Acc. No. 2002.16 A
2

Whitney Pier
Historical Society

MUSEUM

GIFT *Agreement*

This is to certify that I... Peggy Gillis Fubbelkow

the legal owner of the objects listed below, do hereby confirm the unconditional gift and transfer of full title and all privileges of ownership of the objects to the Museum. I understand and agree that they may be displayed, stored, loaned or used in such manner as in the discretion of the Museum authorities may seem to be in the best interests of the Museum.

Portfolio #3

Object/description	Background information
1 ~~1~~ ~~Soft cover~~ Book on Her Father Stephen A Gillis Photo Album & Family History ~~= 11 E 13 Ledge~~ — N Wall ledge 1 #3	Peggy put this Family Album Together Her Self
2 ~~2~~ Sarah Russ, Peggy + Team AK Schedule for Sydney & Area. —	

Date July 10/2002 Signature.....

Address.....

..... Postal code..... Phone.....

Accepted, on behalf of the Museum Stacey Gallivan